

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly

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The Fortnightly.

1879--1899.

Song.

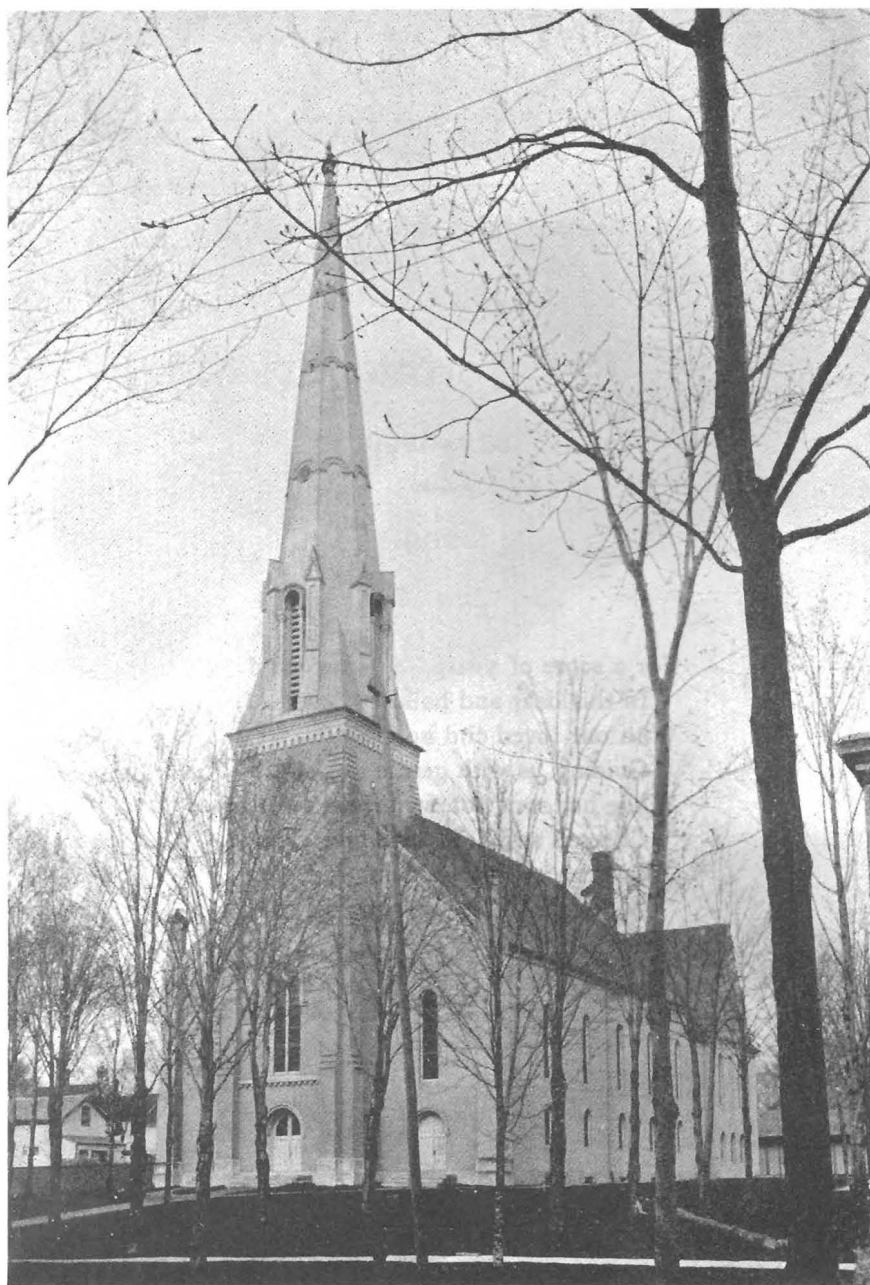
Air "Love Divine."

For a score of years we've gathered
In this dear and hallowed place,
With our loved and honored leader
Guiding us with gentle grace,
While her songs of wondrous sweetness
Cheered and fired each loving heart
To a broader, higher living,
Such as all true lives impart.

May our hearts be full of gladness
For the blessings on us showered,
And our lives be nobler, richer,
Through the teachings here inspired.
"First receiving and then giving"
Ever has our motto been,
And it still shall be our watchword
Till it leads beyond our ken.

— FLORA E. HALL.

The Fortnightly song written for the 20th birthday of the Congregational Church society by one of the charter members, Flora Nichols Hall, born 6 December 1854.



INTRODUCTION

Nineteen hundred eighty-eight is the year of the 200th anniversary of the gathering of the Congregational Church of Rutland, Vermont. Covenanted in 1788, it was the first church to be organized in what was then known as the East Parish. The West Parish, prior to 1886, consisted of what is now Center Rutland, West Rutland and Proctor. Toward the end of the first century after the founding of the East Parish church, a society of women was organized and named The Fortnightly. It had a profound influence upon the growing community.

This history covers highlights of The Fortnightly society of what is now called, since 1969, the Grace Congregational United Church of Christ. It has been written by a committee without the stultifying results usually attributed to a creative effort done by consensus. With Marjory Sparks' committee leadership, and her delicious sandwiches and cookies nourishing those noon-time meetings, a very readable manuscript emerged. Marion Loveland, Mary Hollister, Vera Fish, Florence Boyce and Jean Ross searched the six volumes of records and put together the dramatic story of a significant segment within the church history. Born in 1879, at the end of the following decade after the Civil War, 16 charter members set a new course for women in the church. The charter members drew together when there were no church departments and committees to assume responsibility for many parish duties. Fortnightly members arranged flowers for the Sunday morning services, visited church families, encouraged Sunday School attendance, widened their own theological learning, shared in home and foreign missions and prepared their cultural papers for presentation at their bi-weekly membership meetings.

Church organization gradually changed over the next hundred years. The structure of Fortnightly met that challenge and changed, too, as you will see, but it never sacrificed its integrity, its devotion to the memory of its long-time mentor, Julia Ripley Dorr, and its motto of "First to receive, and then to give."

Marguerite W. Packer
President, 1987-1988

THE FORTNIGHTLY

The First Forty Years

In the decades following the Civil War, many women were beginning to reach out beyond the home for social, intellectual and spiritual stimulation. This need was recognized by the Reverend James G. Johnson, D.D., the pastor of the Congregational Church of Rutland from 1870 to 1885. He had organized the younger men of the church and now in 1879 Dr. Johnson helped the ladies to form the society which they called The Fortnightly. Membership was open to "any lady above the age of sixteen."¹ Those who became charter members were:

Barrett, Ellen C.
Brown, Helen E.
Burditt, Mrs. W. F.
Engrem, Mrs. A. B.
Gary, Mrs. F. W.
Hall, Mrs. H. A.
Harris, Mrs. C. P.
Hoag, Mrs. H. L.

Hollister, Mrs. J. B.
Lee, Mrs. H. H.
Merriam, Mrs. E. N.
Mound, Mrs. Thomas
Perkins, Mary E.
Seaver, Mrs. Norman
Shaw, Mrs. Tully
Simpson, Mrs. C. A.

Dr. Johnson looked around for leadership to guide this organization and found it in Mrs. John B. Page. Fortnightly was organized at her house² and held its first meeting on 15 November 1879. Mrs. Page was 30, young and beautiful, with remarkable gifts and executive ability. The little society was lovingly and wisely nurtured during that first year. Meetings were held in what was termed the chapel parlor of the church. Classes were formed in ancient and modern history, literature and art. New members were voted upon after being sponsored by three women who already were members. Dues were 25¢. The high point of the year was a reception given jointly by the Fortnightly and the Young Men's Union of the church at the Mill Village School building. Over 300 attended. The guest of honor at this successful event was Julia Ripley Dorr, popular poet and novelist. So far as is known, it was Mrs. Dorr's first appearance before a public audience.

It proved to be only the beginning of Mrs. Dorr's involvement with Fortnightly. At the close of the first year, Mrs. Page found herself unable to retain the leadership she had so enjoyed. Her husband, former Governor John Boardman Page, was returning to Montpelier as a representative in the legislature. Under the circumstances, and with the responsibility of a spacious home and two small children, Harriet Page felt that she must relinquish the presidency of Fortnightly.

¹According to the earliest existing constitution (1891). It has long been accepted that the eligibility age for *Fortnightly* originally was between 16-20. However, a recent check of the birth dates of several charter members does not bear this out. Ellen Barrett, for example, was born in 1828, making her 51 years of age in 1879. Flora Hall was born in 1854, so she was 25 years old when she became a charter member. Mrs. Norman Seaver was the mother of The Reverend Norman Seaver, the minister of the church from 1860-1868.

²This prominent home became Sycamore Inn on South Main Street. In recent years it was converted into condominiums.



*The Reverend James G. Johnson, D.D., minister of the Rutland Congregational Church from 1870-1885; sponsor of **The Fortnightly**.*

In the spring of 1880 Mrs. Page drove over to call on Julia Dorr at her home. She asked Mrs. Dorr to accept the presidency. Who better could lead this eager, new group than her very good friend and fellow parishioner? At first reluctant but, as she said, "with great fear and trembling," Mrs. Dorr finally consented to lead this new department of church life. Julia Dorr was 55 years old.

The prominent author and poet was born on 13 February 1825, in Charleston, South Carolina, but her family roots were in Vermont. Her mother died when she was an infant. Her father, William Young Ripley, returned to his native state of Vermont, remarried and settled on a farm near Middlebury. Julia Ripley, therefore, spent most of her growing years in Vermont. Her early education was a mixture of parental tutelage and boarding schools. Her father's well-stocked library provided many hours of reading, a sanctuary for writing poetry, and cubbyholes for hiding her early poetic efforts from detection.

Julia Ripley married Seneca M. Dorr when she was 22. Mr. Dorr later became a prominent politician, serving first as a representative from Rutland to the legislature and, eventually, as senator from Rutland County. The couple built a gracious home on the Creek Road, which they called "The Maples." It was Julia Dorr's home as long as she lived. It was there that her long and distinguished literary career began.

As president of Fortnightly, Julia Dorr's name over the next 33 years became synonymous with the society. She saw its purpose for women flourish: spiritual, moral and intellectual growth, coupled with an outgoing dedication to help others grow. Four years after its founding it had a committee to arrange flowers for the pulpit; the Christian Work Committee arranged to call on families to increase Sunday attendance; it helped to start the Sunday School at Mill Village. The women took charge of a table for periodical literature. An annual contribution was made to the fledgling Rutland Public Library. By 1884 there were 250 members and dues were raised in



*Julia C. R. Dorr, nationally renowned poetess and author in her lifetime, was born in 1825. She was president of *The Fortnightly* at the Rutland Congregational Church from 1880-1913.*

1886 to 50¢, as demands increased upon the treasury. Almost from the beginning of Mrs. Dorr's presidency, Fortnightly gave \$10.00 at Christmas and Easter for flowers in the church, as well as a floral arrangement in honor of the president's own birthday. New members in 1897 were still being sponsored, but the minimum age for membership was raised to accommodate more older women, many of whom wanted to join.

Fortnightly was a pioneer venture in widening women's interests. The early meetings seem to have been informal. The old Fortnightly records (of which there are six volumes) mention afternoons of interesting papers on Christian work and home missions, of sewing for the poor, of doctrinal talks by Dr. Johnson, of discussions about the purchase of an organ. Women who did not wish to join any special interest group remained in the parlor and listened to Mrs. Dorr read and invite discussion. Popular books of the day were chosen: Tom Brown's "School Days," Richard Henry Stoddard on the tercentenary of Shakespeare, Charlotte Brontë's letters, anecdotes of Mother Bickerdyke, army nurse. One December the society presented scenes from Dicken's "Christmas Carol," with Mrs. Dorr as narrator. The reading circles became so popular that within a few years the smaller interest groups were disbanded and all the members met in the parlor with Mrs. Dorr.

Mrs. Dorr was born with a poet's soul and an expressive reading voice. Occasionally, she would try out a poem of her own before sending it to a publisher. When poems appeared in print, members felt a certain proprietary interest in them. On 14 March 1882, Fortnightly held a memorial service for President James A. Garfield. Mrs. Dorr contributed a poem honoring the assassinated president. On the occasion of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's centenary, she read a poem at a great banquet in New York City. She was the only person present who had known Longfellow personally. Fortnightly proudly heard the first reading of the poem in the church parlor.

A Fortnightly banner with a standard was voted in 1883. It was handpainted by Miss Cora Tuttle³ and served the society for nearly 90 years before being retired to the archives in the tower room of the church. Printed programs were used for the first time in the 1885-1886 year. The topic that year was "Six Months in England." Mrs. Dorr gave generously of her time in developing yearly themes. The society had already chosen a motto—"First to receive, then to give." Red ribbons became the badge, a gift from Mrs. Dorr. Fortnightly, in turn, gave Mrs. Dorr an attractive F pin to fasten her own badge. From time to time Mrs. Dorr gently reminded members to wear their red badges to meetings.

During the 1891-1892 meeting year, the Congregational Church underwent some refurbishing. Five of the 13 meetings of Fortnightly, therefore, were held in the vestry of the Baptist Church. Back in their newly decorated parlor, members planned gala days, meetings at the "Maples," and in succeeding years their 20th and 25th birthdays. To celebrate the 20th all the literary societies in the city were invited. Mrs. Dorr brought a sterling silver loving cup given to her by the society at the time of her 73rd birthday in 1898, when she was ill. The first meeting she attended upon her return a year later was the 20th birthday of Fortnightly. She put sprays of forget-me-nots and lilies of the valley in the loving cup. She held the cup aloft and pledged the lilies of the valley for purity and the forget-me-nots for remembrance. Some of those flowers, dried and fragile, lay for many years among the records kept by the society. The society always remembered Mrs. Dorr's birthday. On her 87th in 1912 the gift was a cut glass vase.

³*Cora Albertina Tuttle was born in 1860. She was apparently in her early 20s when she joined The Fortnightly. She was the daughter of Albert Henry Tuttle, who, with his three brothers, published the Rutland Herald. They were also partners in the Tuttle Publishing Company.*



"The Maples," home of Julia C. R. Dorr, located on Creek Road, now called Dorr Drive.



Interior of "The Maples," Julia Dorr's bedroom showing her workdesk.

With the advent of The Fortnightly in 1879 the concept gained momentum. It was called a "liberal education." Kindred societies sprang up in other states and in towns around Vermont; Wallingford, Middletown Springs and Bennington being but three within the state. In 1900 Fortnightly was invited to join the Federation of Women's Clubs, but there was little support for the merger. In 1901 the society at the Rutland Congregational Church welcomed and helped a young Fortnightly in Clarendon.

At the Annual Meeting in 1907 the constitution was amended to have only two standing committees, Social and Studies. The committee on Christian Work to aid in religious and benevolent purposes was dropped, as committees within the church had already taken over these activities. On their president's birthday in 1909 the members were delighted to find Mrs. Dorr's portrait hanging in the room where meetings had been held for almost three decades. The likeness was a gift from Fortnightly to the church.⁴

Fortnightly programs of the period show an increased interest in the status of women. Invitations to share programs and events with other clubs were accepted. These included Unity Club, Rutland Teachers, Woman's Club and The Progressives. A special invitation, eagerly accepted, was to attend an evening meeting of the Rutland Teachers at the high school assembly hall on 31 October 1910. The evening was devoted to the works of Madame Julia C. R. Dorr.

In 34 years Fortnightly had only two presidents and it is a singular coincidence that Mrs. Page and Julia Dorr passed away within two weeks of each other. Mrs. Page died in Philadelphia on 5 January 1913. Fortnightly sent a spray of violets on maiden hair fern. Violets were Mrs. Page's favorite flowers.

In November 1910, Mrs. Dorr, for health reasons, met with the society for the last time. It was then that she passed along to Mrs. W. C. Dunton the keepsake pin which had fastened her presidential badge. She paid tribute to the vice presidents, Mrs. Dunton and Mrs. Burditt, who shared the leadership in her unavoidable absences. Mrs. Dorr, however, by acclamation, was officially the president of Fortnightly as long as she lived. The vice presidents were said to be "in the chair."

Julia Ripley Dorr died on 18 January 1913, at the age of 88. She never lost the keenness of her intellect, the strength of her affections, or her interest in life. The Fortnightly and the directors of the Rutland Free Library attended the funeral in a body.

Nine days later, on January 27th, under the auspices of The Fortnightly, Attorney P. M. Meldon gave a lecture on an "Evening with Kipling," for the benefit of the Rutland Free Library, a project dear to the heart of Mrs. Dorr. She was a founder of the library and was the first president of the board of directors. The affair netted \$85.00 and the ladies voted to make it an even \$100.00.

Fortnightly held a memorial service in the church parlor for their beloved president on 15 February 1913, two days after her birthday. There were representatives from all churches and all societies in the community. Under Mrs. Dorr's picture was a tall vase of pale yellow narcissus and asparagus fern. Beside it stood The Fortnightly banner. A telegram greeting was read from Zulma Dorr Steele, daughter of Mrs. Dorr. Two notes from Mrs. Dorr sent to the members during the year were read. Early the following year the society voted to send a copy of the Dorr memorial service to be placed in Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C.

⁴In 1971 the portrait of Mrs. Dorr was presented to the Rutland Historical Society and hangs in its museum on Center Street.



Julia Dorr at a family wedding in Rutland, June 23, 1909.

Now for the first time in 33 years a nominating committee had to present the name of a new president. Mrs. W. C. Dunton was elected. The first vice president was Mrs. E. D. Burditt; the second vice president Mrs. F. G. Swinnerton.

To everybody's delight the indelicate, cynical remark of one young man who prophesized that literary societies "will all go to the devil when she (Dorr) goes" proved false. The membership of Fortnightly stood at 170. The society continued to grow as a cultural force, a church supporter and a servant to the community. New covers of red velvet bound with gold lace were purchased for the parlor table and piano. Contributions of books and money to the library permanent fund continued. The pastor opened the first meeting of 1914 with his customary greeting. The society pledged \$5.00 to help raise \$123.00 necessary to balance the church books. There were joint meetings with the Woman's Club, the DAR and the Lind Nunc Society at the Baptist Vestry where Miss Emeline Rublie gave a piano recital assisted by Mr. Bertram Brehmer.

Mrs. Dunton, after ten years of leadership, became honorary president and Mrs. Burditt "occupied the chair." Fete Day was cancelled in 1916 due to a scarlet fever outbreak. Money given for Christmas decorations in the church was increased, due to rising prices. The Community House on Center Street across from the church was opened and Fortnightly contributed \$3.00 toward the opening. Grateful thanks were received from the pastor, the Reverend Arthur Bradford.

The outbreak of World War I affected Fortnightly in various quiet ways. War books were not allowed and refreshments were not served during the social hours. Coal conservation caused a transfer of the society's Saturday meetings to the Community House reception room. A deliberate attempt on the part of the Study Committee was made to provide a sanctuary from insistent war news by acquainting members with books in its own library. Programs were offered on the "Present Worth of Poetry" and "Old Vermont Books," the latter presented by Charles E. Tuttle, Senior. And . . . ladies were allowed to knit during the program. The theme for the year was "The Struggle for Liberty." The new pastor, the Reverend Doctor George A. Buttrick, spoke on what fine Americans the Polish people were likely to make with their love of liberty. The society contributed \$10.00 in 1918 to the United War Fund. A picture of Rheims Cathedral was presented and hung in the parlor of the Community House.

In 1919, the Armistice signed, Fortnightly was ready to enter a new decade by celebrating its 40th birthday. The party was postponed until June, with 150 present. The occasion provided increasing appreciation of Fortnightly's unusual heritage, derived from the inspiration and influence of its sources.

The paramount inspiration, of course, had been Julia Dorr. Her legacy to Fortnightly was a few lines about the Joy that, she said, we all can claim.

THE JOY

The joy is in the doing,
Not the deed that's done;
The swift and glad pursuing,
Not the goal that's won.

The joy is in the seeing,
Not in what we see;
The ecstasy of vision,
Far and clear and free!

The joy is in the singing,
Whether heard or no;
The poet's wild, sweet rapture,
And songs divinest flow!

The joy is in the being. . . .
Joy of life and breath;
Joy of a soul triumphant,
Conqueror of death!

Is there a flaw in the marble?
Sculptor, do your best;
The joy is in the endeavor. . . .
Leave to God the rest!

People are not alive today who knew Julia Dorr personally, yet her spirit still sustains the purpose and energy of Fortnightly. Every meeting is opened with a selected reading of one of her poems by a member of the society. She was in 1900 among the best known and most popular writers of that day. As a writer of poetry, novels and travel books, she expressed interests and problems of her time. She is now forgotten by the present generation. Betty Bendel, professor (retired), University of Vermont, believes that "Dorr's revival has not yet come . . . but it will. She will then supply a splendid picture of the era in which she lived." In the meantime, Fortnightly keeps the memory alive.

1920-1988

The bylaws of Fortnightly have never predetermined the length of the terms of office. Several presidents have been re-elected annually to serve as long as 10 years. Mrs. Vernon Loveland (1954-1964) and Mrs. Edmund Boyce (1967-1977) are two presidents who each filled the office for a decade. Apart from Mrs. Dorr's 33 years as president, the longest term of office was that of Miss Beth Gilchrist who filled the chair for 25 years. Beth Gilchrist was the epitome of Fortnightly. She was a descendant of Governor Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony. While not a charter member, she had joined the Fortnightly Society before the turn of the century. She was a faithful member of the Ladies Aid Society and is known to have worked on a children's sociable in 1897. For several years she was secretary of Fortnightly, resigning that office in 1924. Beth was a protegee of Julia Dorr and was a recognized writer of children's books, including many in serial form. She also wrote articles for outstanding magazines and, of course, study papers for Fortnightly programs. Her ancestral home was at 79 Center Street, where the GE Credit Union is located. In what is now an asphalt parking lot, Beth Gilchrist had a breath-taking flower garden and a gazebo where she served tea for her Fortnightly friends. Beth Gilchrist was president of Fortnightly from 1929 to 1954.

And then there were secretaries whose reports allow us to reconstruct the past. Marion Gary was one of this faithful group. She, too, was an early member of Fortnightly and member of the Committee on Studies. She served on the General Committee for care of the church and in 1896 was superintendent of the Sunday School. Miss Gary was a graduate of Smith College and an active worker in Vermont educational projects, especially conditions in one-room schoolhouses. She was a member of the American Association of University Women and an enthusiastic supporter of women's rights. She worked avidly to get her married friends "out of the kitchen" and into Fortnightly or other organizations that might stimulate them mentally and artistically. Mrs. Mabel Stafford, Senator Robert Stafford's mother, was one of her friends whom she "took in hand." Like Beth Gilchrist, Marion Gary loved to hold tea parties at her home on Grove Street. The beautiful silver service that she used was willed to the Fortnightly Society.

Another secretary whose personality left an indelible imprint on Fortnightly was Martha Bucklin. She was never home to receive visitors but could be counted on to be out taking care of a stray animal, helping the rejected, the sorrowing, the downtrodden, all before there was a humane society or an Open Door Mission. Mrs. Bucklin had a weekly song and story program on the local radio station. She was the Music Lady, teaching songs and games to children and bringing helpful philosophy and encouragement to young mothers.

It was leaders such as these in the early part of the 20th century whose travels, community interests and professional competence sustained and broadened the church society so dedicated to self improvement and giving of self to community causes. Not to be overlooked in this respect are Doctor Emelie Perkins and Betsy Wild. Daughter of Mrs. C. O. Perkins, Emelie was a rebel and a pioneer in many ways. As a young woman she taught Sunday School. As a youthful graduate of Smith College, she did the Grand Tour of Europe; she studied art and in her later years had a number of one-person shows. She was a public health nurse and then broke precedent when she became one of the first women graduates of the Medical College of Vermont. She was the only female in her class. Dr. Perkins lived a rich and useful life, dying just short of her 96th birthday.

Mrs. Sergeant Wild was one of Emelie's close friends. Betsy served on the Fortnightly Studies and Social committees. She was the first woman to graduate from

the agricultural college at the University of Wisconsin. With varied interests in the arts, gardening, literature and social work, she was a member of the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women. There are many other women who might be mentioned. These are but representative of the valuable counsel provided to the society in an era when fewer women were college educated or had interests outside the home.

It would be interesting if we could read the manuscripts of the study papers presented by the women who were members of Fortnightly before and after the turn of the century. Unfortunately, none survive. If the chosen themes for the year are any indication, the ladies took their assignments very seriously. Following World War I, the theme for 1920-1921 was "Ideas and Ideals of the Nations." There was a reaching out for hope and renewal. Such topics as America's opportunities, the art of Italy, modern Greece, the new Arabia, the British Labor Party, the Zionist movement, the place of Japan . . . all and more were explored. Germany and Russia were not touched upon. In her annual report for 1920-1921 Miss Beth Gilchrist, secretary, wrote: "For over 40 years Fortnightly has served as a social binder and mental stimulant to the women of our church, and here its service is not easy to compute. Largely this must remain for each a matter of individual response; yet its opportunity in the present, as in the past, is measured only by the loyalty, the enterprise and the desire of its membership."

Music has always been a cultural priority with Fortnightly. One Fete Day in 1920 Mrs. Earl Wright, accomplished pianist, played Rachmaninoff's Sonata in A Minor. The following year the Fete Day program was also arranged by Mrs. Wright. "Songs of Nations" were played by Christine as she accompanied Mrs. Cocklin, soprano with the church quartet.

Christine Bigelow Wright brought talent, enthusiasm and beauty of form and personality to the society. A graduate of Oberlin College, she played the organ in the sanctuary for several years. As a devoted member of Fortnightly, she prepared numerous delightful programs for special occasions. She gave generously of her time both at church and in the community. She was one of the founders of the Community Concert Series, the forerunner of the present Crossroads Art Council. She was president of the Women's Fellowship from 1952-1954 and an enthusiastic worker at rummage sales and church suppers. To those who knew her, she seemed to make music wherever she went.

Other forms of art found their way repeatedly into programs for Fortnightly. In its 44th year Zulma Dorr Steele, Mrs. Dorr's daughter, shared "An Afternoon With My Mother's Poems." Two of Mrs. Dorr's poems had been set to music by Eban Bailey of Boston and were sung that afternoon by a Miss Eva Streeter of Dorset. Playreading was a group activity favored by members on snowy Saturday afternoons. They read such authors as W. B. Yeats, James M. Barrie and Edna Ferber. But there were also talks about the magic of radio and "The Real Girl and the Flapper." One quite erudite topic in the mid-twenties was "What Is the World Thinking About?" There was, without doubt, a serious attempt to keep abreast of the times.

The 44th year (1923) was a year of innovations: An endowment fund in Mrs. Dorr's memory, the interest to be used annually to provide flowers in church on the Sunday nearest Mrs. Dorr's birthday. The Julia Dorr Memorial Fund was started with individual pledges amounting to \$100. By the following year the amount reached \$200 and the interest could be used for its established purpose. The fund reached a thousand dollars by 1970. With the risen cost of floral arrangements, the fund is protected and presently held in a certificate of deposit. A second innovation that year was to open at least three meetings a year to guests. The guests were usually invited to meetings with speakers from outside. Miss Elizabeth Drew of Gorton College, Cam-



Church parlor, circa 1915. Left, *The Fortnightly* banner; above it, right, a picture of Mrs. Dorr. Picture right center, may be Mrs. John Page. Note the velvet covers, edged in gilt lace, on tables and piano, gift from *The Fortnightly*.

bridge, Massachusetts, lectured on "Jane Austen and Her Times;" Mrs. Mary Robinson Perkins talked about her father, the Vermont folk writer, E. Rowland Robinson. Tea was served at these meetings where guests were present.

In the 45th year the society's records report a reading of one of Mrs. Dorr's poems at each meeting. This was instituted by the time Mrs. George Cassidy was president. Apparently, the president did the reading, a custom that continued for some thirty years. Then during the presidency of Mrs. Edmund Boyce in the mid-1960s, she used her presiding prerogative to have a designated member of the society select and read a Julia Dorr poem of her own choice. This participation by members continues today.

Until the turn of the century Fortnightly celebrated its birthdays every five or ten years. Then the anniversaries began to be spaced by the quarter of the century. In the 1928-1929 meeting year Fortnightly celebrated 50 golden years. The anniversary was a gala affair . . . a luncheon held at the Mead Community House, with over a hundred members and guests gathered to hear Dr. Dallas Lore Sharp of Boston University speak on "The Muse of America." In his speech Dr. Sharp agreed with Nicholas Murray Butler (Columbia University president) in his assertion that the period was producing no great poets, but mentioned some minor poets . . . Robert Frost, Carl Sandberg, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Edward Arlington Robinson, Stephen Benet, Edna St. Vincent Millay. He concluded his talk with a statement of hope and faith that a really great poet would appear in America. One might wonder if Dr. Sharp would qualify his statement after a retrospective fifty years and four Pulitzer prizes awarded to Robert Frost!

A meaningful program during that 50th year was given by Beth Gilchrist who read from letters "lifted from an oaken chest." These were letters to Mrs. Dorr from fellow poets, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Boyle O'Reilly, William Dean Howells, Edmund Clarence Stedman and members of his family.⁵ The year reached its climax with a review of the 50-year history of Fortnightly presented by Mrs. C. O. Perkins. It touched upon the leadership, committee work, its advisory members, its subjects of study, the Julia C. R. Dorr Fund, as well as its anniversaries and Fete Days. The secretary, Miss Marion Gary, reported, "Mrs. Perkins' paper gave all Fortnightly members a glow of happy pride in the past, and a vision for the future."

But that vision did not foretell the anxieties, the horrors and the sacrifices of the Second World War. In her annual report for the 1945-1946 year the secretary wrote, "New are the ways of today and strange. Old traditions are being trampled upon . . . perhaps to flower more abundantly." During this period of national stress there were no study papers presented by members; only four meetings were held. Except for a musical program presented by Martha Bucklin, the programs for the remaining meetings were presented by two college professors and librarian. The membership dropped from 157 to 109.

In an attempt to bolster morale the following year, eight programs were scheduled, yet the majority were on topics uttermost in people's minds: "Can the United Nations Keep the Peace?," "Russia's Role," "The Atomic Bomb." Mary Morris Seale of Barnard College warned about being apathetic and refusing contact with the changing world around us. Three programs that year, however, were light-hearted. An organ recital, a playreading and another afternoon of music arranged by Martha Bucklin balanced the year's meetings.

⁵A large collection of Mrs. Dorr's papers is held in the Abernathy Library of American Literature at Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont.

The aftermath of World War II did indeed trample upon old traditions. The place of women in society reached a new status. Domestic help was no longer easily available; more mothers were employed; more young women were continuing their education, and delaying marriage. All of these trends affected the membership of Fortnightly and the way it functioned. But the society responded to change as circumstances made it advisable. The sponsorship of new members was discontinued; membership became open to all women of the church. The meeting time was changed from Saturday afternoon to Friday in the afternoon. No longer meeting bi-weekly, the society began to meet on a monthly basis between October and May. Study papers by members had long ago been abandoned. When the church bylaws were ratified in the 1960s, and four departments created, the Fortnightly was assigned to the Department of Mission and Service where its delegate regularly participates with members of that department.

The 75th year (1954) opened with the reception of the gift of a lectern for the church parlor. It was presented by Mrs. William Dunn with, as she said, "Gratitude for many kindnesses to her."⁶ The lectern was made by Mr. William Farwell, fine arts and antiques appraiser, from wood found in Rutland. The Reverend Roland P. Rice accepted the gift. The occasion was also marked that year by the attendance at the luncheon of four past presidents of Fortnightly: Mrs. E. D. Burditt (1918-1923), Mrs. George Cassidy (1923-1927), Mrs. James C. Dunn (1927-1929) and Miss Beth Gilchrist (1929-1954) . . . a span of 36 presidential years. Reminiscing, of course, was the order of the day, recalling the establishment of what today would be called "Adult Education."

Several program speakers in 1954 related their talks to the place of Fortnightly in state and local history. Doctor Arthur Peach, director of the Vermont Historical Society, talked on "Highlights of Vermont History." Leonard B. Archer, librarian at the Rutland Free Library, talked about "Rutland 75 Years Ago." He compared the news and ads in the *Rutland Herald* (founded in 1794) with the daily paper in 1954. Letters to the editor were very popular 75 years ago, but in some cases not "very gentlemanly." Some issues, he said, do not seem to change. Capital punishment was widely debated, as was the rise in wealth and power; low salaries for teachers and services maintained by the railroad received lengthy coverage. Ads for patent medicine proliferated; stylish dressmakers advertised. Divorces were many . . . even then. Overalls sold for 25¢. Mr. Archer pointed out in his talk that in 1879 there were 34 trains running out daily from the downtown station where the Rutland Shopping Plaza is now located.

At the 100th celebration a special program was prepared by Mrs. Edmund Boyce, former president, for the September 1978 meeting in Fellowship Hall. Along with an interesting review of the society's history, books, records and pictures were on display. The dramatic poem, "Rena," by Julia Dorr was dramatized by six actors and actresses. Mrs. Horace Hollister presented a set of Bible markers as an anniversary gift to the church. The Reverend David J. Dean accepted the gift on behalf of the church. The new markers are used in the sanctuary.

Membership from the 1950s to the present time maintains an average of 90, with between 40 and 50 attending the monthly meetings at 2:00 PM on the third Friday of the month in the church parlor. Dues that were 25¢ annually in 1879 are now \$4.00. The society has never been a money-raising organization. It has, however, made modest contributions over the years to various causes out of membership dues and

⁶Mrs. William Dunn was an Episcopalian and, apparently, a frequent guest at Fortnightly meetings. Mrs. Vernon Loveland, president at the time of the 75th birthday, has said it was confusing to know who were members and who were faithful guests.

voluntary contributions. In the beginning, there was the public library, then the state's Traveling Lending Library, the United War Fund and, later, the Flour Fund for needy people. For the church itself, there were furnishings for the parlor and flowers at Christmas and Easter in the sanctuary. In 1963 a Beth Gilchrist Fund was voted to purchase books for the church library. Marion Loveland served as consultant for the purchase of books. When the "Hanging of the Greens" began in the mid-1960s as a church tradition, Fortnightly voted seed money to help finance the annual Christmas pageant. In 1982 \$100 was voted to the Youth Group in the church to support the young people's housing mission to Biloxi, Mississippi. The gift from Fortnightly for the 200th anniversary of Grace Church is a handsome wall hanging to be placed in the church vestibule. The crewel work with a peace design was done by Ann Fahey who sings in the church choir.

As Grace Congregation United Church of Christ celebrates its 200th anniversary in 1988, Fortnightly is 109 years old. It has met changing times with internal changes. The red ribbon badges are no longer worn by members as they attend meetings. The membership is half the number it was a hundred years ago and is an older age group. The minister a hundred years ago, as the sponsor of the society, opened the year's program each fall and occasionally was scheduled for theological talks with the members. Today the minister joins the meeting during the social hour, accepts a cup of tea, and becomes a part of the afternoon's sociability. Members have enjoyed slide shows presented by Reverend David Dean following his trips abroad with Grace Church Tours, as well as his Sabbatical journey to Southeast Asia in 1983. Members look forward at monthly meetings to the descriptive record-keeping of their secretary, Vera Fish, who has held this office for 12 years. Mrs. Fish has a talent for adjectives and in her reports lie the history of Fortnightly's second hundred years.

And how is the society no different from what it was a hundred years ago? The same hope and enthusiasm that animated the 16 charter members are evident today as the society moves into the second century. The floral arrangement placed on the communion table in the sanctuary each year on the Sunday nearest the birthday of Julia Dorr keeps alive the loving memory of a gifted and vivid personality. Then there is a quaint residual from the 1890s, reflecting the social manners of the Victorian era. With today's informality and emphasis on "inclusive language," most people respond to their given name even after a brief acquaintance. But the membership roster of Fortnightly, printed in the annual program, still lists each married woman by her husband's name. It is a nostalgic touch that brings the history of The Fortnightly to full circle.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Geneological information regarding early members: Dawn Hance, Marvel Swan.
Photographs: Rutland Historical Society, Grace Congregational UCC

PRESIDENTS OF THE FORTNIGHTLY

Mrs. John B. Page	1879-1880
Mrs. Julia C. R. Dorr	1880-1913
Mrs. W. C. Dunton	1913-1918
Mrs. E. D. Burditt	1918-1923
Mrs. George Cassidy	1923-1927
Mrs. James C. Dunn	1927-1929
Miss Beth B. Gilchrist	1929-1954
Mrs. Vernon J. Loveland	1954-1964
Mrs. Hermon K. Sherburne	1964-1967
Mrs. Edmund L. Boyce	1967-1977
Mrs. Chester B. Eaton	1977-1980
Mrs. Horace M. Hollister	1980-1984
Mrs. Raymond E. Sparks	1984-1987
Mrs. Harry Q. Packer	1987-1988

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